

Mary Ellen McGuire

February 28 2023

Good morning, Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Mary Ellen McGuire, and I am the Executive Director of Bridge House in Bridgeport. For the past seven years I have witnessed a remarkable transformation in the lives of members who proudly call themselves members of Bridge House. Our members are accessing resources at Bridge House that are life altering—they get involved in our jobs program, which is very crucial in their getting back their self-esteem. In my capacity as the Executive Director of Bridge House, I have been a witness to the transformation of people's lives. With the help of our staff and other members, individual members are able to access resources that can make all the difference in the world as to how they live their lives going forward. They have access to social events here at Bridge House, which helps to prevent isolation; they make friends here; they are encouraged to go back to school, to seek employment, and at Bridge House we are able to help people get back into the workforce if they so desire to do so. We also have a housing club, which supports people not only in obtaining housing, but holding on to their housing, which is critical. Our folks are challenged with a variety of issues that can sometimes make having a rent and having to be responsible for that rent difficult. So, we have that housing club that deals with that, as well as a Member Bank, which helps folks make their payments on time to landlords and to utilities and so forth.

I think the most important thing to me as Executive Director here is to make sure that Bridge House has the resources it needs to provide the program that we do provide. Without the resources from the state, we would not be able to keep our doors open—that's a fact. And if the state were to pull back any of our money that would jeopardize our program and jeopardize the lives of our members. That's not hyperbole. I truly believe that their lives are dependent on us remaining open.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.